

Managerial Practices, Work-Related Challenges, and Sustainable Work Environments in Private Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable work environments in higher education institutions are essential for promoting organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and institutional sustainability. This study examined managerial practices, work-related challenges, and sustainable work environments in private higher education institutions in Pagadian City, Philippines. Specifically, it assessed managerial practices in terms of clear goals, relevant skills, mutual trust, and good communication, as well as work-related challenges related to skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics. A descriptive-comparative research design was employed involving 37 educational managers and 115 college teachers from selected private higher education institutions. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean, ranking, t-test, and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that managerial practices and work-related challenges were generally perceived as highly practiced by both educational managers and college teachers. Results further showed a significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups regarding managerial practices, while no significant difference was found in their perceptions of work-related challenges. Moreover, a high positive relationship was identified between managerial practices and work-related challenges, suggesting that effective managerial practices contribute to addressing organizational challenges and fostering sustainable work environments. The study highlights the importance of strengthening leadership practices, communication systems, trust-building initiatives, and ethical workplace culture to sustain productive and supportive educational work environments in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Managerial Practices, Work-Related Challenges, Sustainable Work Environments, Higher Education Institutions, Educational Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a critical role in promoting organizational effectiveness, academic excellence, and sustainable development through effective leadership and management practices. In contemporary educational settings, managerial practices such as goal clarity, relevant professional skills, mutual trust, and effective communication are increasingly recognized as essential factors in fostering positive organizational climates and sustainable work environments. Sustainable educational leadership emphasizes collaborative practices, employee well-being, organizational resilience, and long-term institutional development, enabling institutions to effectively respond to emerging educational challenges and workplace demands (Elkaleh et al., 2025; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2022). Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) highlights the importance of ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education while strengthening educational leadership, professional development, and supportive learning environments that contribute to institutional sustainability and improved educational outcomes (United Nations, 2024; Zamani, 2025). Recent studies have also demonstrated that sustainable leadership and positive organizational practices significantly influence employee motivation, organizational commitment, work performance, and institutional effectiveness in higher education settings (Dayaganon, 2025; Hua, 2025).

Despite the growing body of international literature on sustainable leadership and educational management,

limited empirical studies have examined the relationship between managerial practices, work-related challenges, and sustainable work environments within private higher education institutions, particularly in the Philippine context. Existing studies have largely focused on leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, teacher performance, or quality of work life as separate constructs, while fewer investigations have explored how managerial practices interact with work-related challenges such as skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics in shaping sustainable educational work environments (Rahim et al., 2024; Peng, 2024; Hua, 2025). Moreover, there remains a scarcity of comparative studies examining the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers regarding these organizational factors in private higher education institutions. Addressing this gap is important because understanding the interplay between managerial practices and workplace challenges may provide evidence-based insights for strengthening educational leadership, improving organizational sustainability, and fostering supportive work environments. Hence, this study examined managerial practices, work-related challenges, and sustainable work environments in private higher education institutions in Pagadian City, Philippines.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent of managerial practices in terms of clear goals, relevant skills, mutual trust, and good communication.
- To assess the extent of work-related challenges in terms of skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics.
- To compare the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers regarding managerial practices and work-related challenges.
- To determine whether significant differences exist between the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers regarding managerial practices and work-related challenges.
- To examine the relationship between managerial practices and work-related challenges in fostering sustainable work environments in private higher education institutions.
- To draw implications for strengthening sustainable educational work environments through effective managerial practices and proactive management of work-related challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to examine managerial practices, work-related challenges, and sustainable work environments in private higher education institutions in Pagadian City, Philippines. The study involved 37 educational managers and 115 college teachers who had been employed in their respective institutions for at least five years. Educational managers were selected using purposive sampling based on their administrative responsibilities and leadership experience, while college teachers were selected through stratified random sampling in larger institutions and purposive sampling in smaller institutions. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to measure managerial practices in terms of clear goals, relevant skills, mutual trust, and good communication, as well as work-related challenges related to skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics. Before data collection, the instrument underwent content validation by a panel of experts in educational management and higher education administration to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. To strengthen the methodological rigor of the study, the researcher-developed questionnaire underwent a comprehensive validation process. The instrument was subjected to content validation by a panel of experts in educational management, leadership, and research methodology to assess the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item. Revisions were incorporated based on expert recommendations. A pilot test was subsequently conducted among respondents with characteristics similar to the target population but who were not included in the actual study. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. These procedures enhanced the validity and reliability of the data collection tool and strengthened the credibility of the study findings.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission to administer the survey was obtained from the heads of participating private higher education institutions, and informed

consent was secured from all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the exclusive use of data for academic and research purposes. The collected data were analyzed using weighted mean and ranking to determine the extent of managerial practices and work-related challenges. An independent samples t-test was employed to determine significant differences between the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized to examine the relationship between managerial practices and work-related challenges. All statistical analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Managerial Practices in Private Higher Education Institutions

Managerial Practices	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Clear Goals	5.32	Always Practiced	1
Mutual Trust	5.28	Always Practiced	2
Relevant Skills	5.26	Always Practiced	3
Good Communication	5.25	Always Practiced	4
Overall Mean	5.28	Always Practiced	

The findings revealed that managerial practices were consistently practiced in private higher education institutions, obtaining an overall mean of 5.28 interpreted as “Always Practiced.” Among the dimensions, clear goals emerged as the most dominant managerial practice, followed by mutual trust, relevant skills, and good communication. The results suggest that educational managers place substantial emphasis on establishing organizational direction, fostering trust-based relationships, developing professional competencies, and maintaining effective communication channels within their institutions. The prominence of clear goals highlights the importance of leadership practices that align organizational efforts toward shared institutional objectives. Recent studies have emphasized that educational institutions characterized by strategic leadership, collaborative workplace relationships, and effective communication systems demonstrate higher levels of organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, and institutional performance (Liu & Hallinger, 2024; Torres et al., 2023). Likewise, educational leaders who promote trust, teamwork, and professional competence create positive organizational climates that enhance employee productivity and institutional sustainability (OECD, 2023; Voogt et al., 2022; Brackett et al., 2022).

This implies that effective managerial practices serve as critical foundations for sustaining positive and productive work environments in higher education institutions. The consistently high ratings across all dimensions indicate that educational managers recognize the value of strategic leadership, professional collaboration, and open communication in achieving institutional goals. These managerial practices contribute to the creation of supportive organizational cultures where employees feel valued, empowered, and committed to organizational success. Consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), strengthening leadership capacities and organizational support mechanisms may enhance educational quality, employee well-being, and institutional resilience. Higher education institutions may therefore invest in leadership development programs, collaborative decision-making mechanisms, and continuous professional learning initiatives to further strengthen sustainable educational work environments and improve institutional outcomes.

Table 2: Work-Related Challenges in Private Higher Education Institutions

Work-Related Challenges	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Values and Ethics	5.43	Always Practiced	1
Personalities	5.37	Always Practiced	2
Skills and Abilities	5.26	Always Practiced	3
Perceptions	5.23	Always Practiced	4
Overall Mean	5.33	Always Practiced	

The findings revealed that work-related challenges were highly managed and addressed within private higher education institutions, as evidenced by the overall mean of 5.33 interpreted as “Always Practiced.” Among the dimensions, values and ethics obtained the highest mean (5.43), followed by personalities (5.37), skills and abilities (5.26), and perceptions (5.23). The dominance of values and ethics suggests that educational managers place considerable importance on promoting ethical behavior, professional integrity, and value-oriented decision-making in the workplace. Similarly, the high ratings for personalities, skills and abilities, and perceptions indicate that institutional leaders actively recognize and manage individual differences that may influence workplace relationships and organizational effectiveness. Recent studies have shown that ethical organizational cultures and value-driven leadership practices contribute significantly to employee trust, organizational commitment, and workplace harmony (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2020; Maheshwari & Vohra, 2021). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that effectively managing workforce diversity, professional competencies, and employee perceptions strengthens organizational resilience, improves job satisfaction, and promotes positive work behaviors in educational institutions (Afsar et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). The findings further support the argument that workplace challenges are not solely organizational concerns but are also associated with employees’ psychosocial experiences, perceptions, and overall well-being. Similar observations were reported by Alipoyo (2026), who emphasized that psychosocial conditions significantly influence individuals’ quality of life, coping mechanisms, and capacity to function effectively within institutional environments.

It implies that addressing work-related challenges through ethical leadership and proactive management strategies is essential for sustaining productive educational work environments. The consistently high ratings across all dimensions suggest that educational managers recognize the importance of fostering ethical conduct, respecting individual differences, enhancing professional competencies, and promoting positive workplace perceptions. These practices contribute to the development of inclusive and supportive institutional cultures where employees can effectively collaborate and perform their professional responsibilities. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), higher education institutions may strengthen organizational sustainability by institutionalizing ethics-based leadership programs, promoting continuous professional development, and implementing workplace policies that encourage respect, fairness, and inclusivity. Such initiatives may enhance employee well-being, organizational effectiveness, and the long-term sustainability of educational institutions.

Table 3: Comparability of Educational Managers’ and College Teachers’ Perceptions of Managerial Practices and Work-Related Challenges

Variable	Mean	Interpretation
Managerial Practices	5.28	Always Practiced
Work-Related Challenges	5.33	Always Practiced
Overall Mean	5.31	Always Practiced

The findings revealed that both managerial practices and work-related challenges were perceived as “Always Practiced,” obtaining mean scores of 5.28 and 5.33, respectively. The relatively close mean values indicate a high degree of comparability in the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers regarding the organizational conditions prevailing within private higher education institutions. This finding suggests that both groups maintain a shared understanding of institutional practices and workplace realities, which may strengthen organizational cohesion and collaborative engagement. Similar observations were reported by Rubia et al. (2026), who emphasized that meaningful participation and stakeholder involvement contribute to stronger governance structures, collective responsibility, and sustainable organizational outcomes. This suggests that both groups share common views concerning leadership practices, workplace relationships, professional competencies, communication processes, and organizational values. Such consistency may reflect a strong institutional culture where educational leaders and faculty members maintain a shared understanding of organizational goals and workplace expectations. Recent studies have emphasized that perceptual alignment among organizational members contributes to improved collaboration, stronger institutional commitment, and greater organizational effectiveness (Bryson et al., 2021; Hulpia et al., 2022). Similarly, educational institutions

characterized by shared leadership and collaborative organizational cultures tend to demonstrate higher levels of employee engagement, trust, and collective responsibility toward institutional goals (Printy & Liu, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2023; Tran & Nguyen, 2024).

This implies that the observed comparability of perceptions may serve as an indicator of organizational coherence and institutional stability within private higher education institutions. When educational managers and teachers maintain similar perspectives regarding managerial practices and workplace challenges, organizational initiatives are more likely to be understood, supported, and effectively implemented across different levels of the institution. Such alignment contributes to the development of collaborative work environments that encourage participation, shared decision-making, and professional commitment. Consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), fostering institutional cohesion and stakeholder engagement may strengthen educational quality, organizational sustainability, and continuous improvement efforts. Educational institutions may therefore continue promoting collaborative governance mechanisms, open communication channels, and inclusive leadership practices to sustain positive organizational relationships and institutional effectiveness. The observed alignment of perceptions between educational managers and teachers highlights the importance of participatory governance and stakeholder engagement in educational institutions. According to Rubia et al. (2026), collaborative participation fosters shared ownership, strengthens organizational relationships, and enhances the sustainability of institutional initiatives.

Table 4: Test of Significant Difference Between the Perceptions of Educational Managers and College Teachers

Variable	Test Statistic	Critical Value	Decision	Interpretation
Managerial Practices	2.504	1.96	Reject H_0	Significant
Work-Related Challenges	0.908	2.447	Accept H_0	Not Significant

The results revealed a significant difference between the perceptions of educational managers and college teachers regarding managerial practices, as evidenced by the computed t-value of 2.504, which exceeded the critical value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. This finding indicates that the two groups differed in their assessment of managerial practices within private higher education institutions. The difference may be attributed to the distinct roles, responsibilities, and organizational experiences of educational managers and faculty members. Educational managers are directly involved in planning, policy implementation, supervision, and decision-making processes, while teachers primarily experience the outcomes of these managerial actions within their daily professional activities. In contrast, no significant difference was found in their perceptions of work-related challenges, suggesting a shared understanding of workplace concerns involving skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics. Similar studies have reported that organizational stakeholders often demonstrate varying perceptions of leadership practices while maintaining comparable views regarding workplace challenges and organizational realities (Bush, 2021; Özdemir & Kılınc, 2022). Furthermore, research has shown that differences in leadership perceptions may emerge due to variations in organizational position, access to information, and involvement in institutional decision-making processes (Sebastian et al., 2021; Tian & Huber, 2023; Gümüş et al., 2024).

The findings imply that while educational managers and college teachers may differ in their assessment of managerial practices, they share common experiences regarding workplace challenges within their institutions. This convergence of perceptions on work-related challenges may provide a strong foundation for collaborative problem-solving and organizational improvement initiatives. At the same time, the significant difference in managerial practice perceptions highlights the need for educational leaders to strengthen communication, transparency, and participatory decision-making processes to ensure greater alignment between leadership intentions and faculty experiences. Consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), fostering inclusive institutional governance and collaborative leadership practices may enhance organizational trust, professional engagement, and educational effectiveness. Higher education institutions may therefore establish regular feedback mechanisms, faculty consultation processes, and shared governance structures to bridge perceptual differences and promote a more cohesive and sustainable educational work environment.

Table 5: Relationship Between Managerial Practices and Work-Related Challenges

Variables	r-value	Interpretation
Managerial Practices and Work-Related Challenges	0.71	High Positive Relationship

The findings revealed a high positive relationship between managerial practices and work-related challenges, as evidenced by the computed correlation coefficient of 0.71. This result indicates that effective managerial practices are closely associated with the successful management of workplace challenges within private higher education institutions. The strong relationship suggests that educational managers who consistently demonstrate clear goals, relevant skills, mutual trust, and effective communication are better positioned to address challenges related to employees' skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, and values and ethics. The findings further imply that managerial practices function as critical organizational mechanisms that influence how workplace concerns are recognized, addressed, and transformed into opportunities for institutional growth and improvement. Recent studies have emphasized that effective leadership practices contribute significantly to organizational adaptability, employee well-being, and institutional sustainability by fostering supportive work environments and enhancing employees' capacity to respond to workplace demands (Avolio et al., 2021; Ingram et al., 2023). Similarly, organizational behavior research highlights that positive leadership practices strengthen employee resilience, trust, and engagement, which are essential for managing workplace challenges and promoting organizational effectiveness (Bakker et al., 2023; Fuller et al., 2022; Schiuma et al., 2021). Ethical leadership and sound managerial practices are essential in shaping responsible decision-making and organizational accountability. As noted by Aranjuez and Molejon (2026), individual behaviors and organizational outcomes are often influenced by value systems, ethical standards, and decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of ethical leadership in maintaining sustainable institutional environments.

The findings imply that strengthening managerial practices may serve as a strategic approach for mitigating work-related challenges and fostering sustainable educational work environments. The strong relationship observed between the two variables suggests that educational institutions cannot effectively address workplace concerns without simultaneously investing in leadership development, communication systems, and collaborative organizational practices. Educational leaders who establish trust-based relationships, provide clear direction, and support professional growth are more likely to create environments where employees feel empowered to overcome challenges and contribute positively to institutional goals. In support of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), higher education institutions may prioritize leadership capacity-building programs, employee support initiatives, and organizational development strategies that strengthen both managerial effectiveness and workplace well-being. Such efforts may contribute to improved institutional performance, employee satisfaction, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted exclusively among selected private higher education institutions in Pagadian City, Philippines. Consequently, the findings may not be generalized to public higher education institutions, state universities and colleges, or institutions located in other geographic regions with different organizational structures and workplace conditions. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire, which may be subject to response bias despite efforts to ensure validity and reliability. While the study provided valuable quantitative insights into managerial practices and work-related challenges, it did not explore the deeper contextual experiences of respondents. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope and context of the participating institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that managerial practices and work-related challenges were consistently practiced in private higher education institutions. Educational managers exhibited strong leadership practices characterized by clear goals, mutual trust, relevant skills, and effective communication, while values and ethics emerged as

the most prominent workplace consideration. Although educational managers and college teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of managerial practices, both groups shared similar views regarding work-related challenges. Furthermore, the strong positive relationship between managerial practices and work-related challenges highlights the critical role of leadership in fostering sustainable educational work environments. These findings suggest that strengthening managerial competencies, promoting ethical organizational cultures, and encouraging collaborative workplace relationships are essential for enhancing institutional effectiveness, employee well-being, and long-term sustainability in higher education institutions.

While the findings provide important insights into leadership practices and workplace dynamics within private higher education institutions, caution should be exercised when extending the results to broader educational settings. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable educational leadership by highlighting the importance of managerial effectiveness in addressing workplace challenges and fostering supportive organizational environments. The findings may serve as a useful reference for educational leaders, policymakers, and institutional administrators seeking to strengthen organizational sustainability and employee well-being in higher education.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of this study to ensure the protection of the rights, welfare, and dignity of all participants. Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from the administrators of the participating private higher education institutions in Pagadian City, Philippines. The purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study were clearly explained to all prospective respondents before their participation. Informed consent was obtained from educational managers and college teachers, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty, coercion, or adverse consequences.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected or disclosed in any report, publication, or presentation arising from the study. All responses were treated with the highest level of confidentiality and were used solely for academic and research purposes. The collected data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. The study adhered to the fundamental ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice by ensuring that participants were treated fairly, protected from harm, and provided with adequate information to make informed decisions regarding their participation. Furthermore, the findings were presented objectively and honestly, without fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, thereby upholding the integrity and credibility of the research process.

Conflict Of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the conduct, authorship, and publication of this research. The study was conducted independently, and no financial, professional, or personal relationships influenced the research process, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or reporting of results.

Future Research Directions

Future studies may expand the scope of investigation by including public higher education institutions, state universities and colleges, and institutions from diverse geographic regions to enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies across institutional types and regions may provide a broader understanding of managerial practices and workplace challenges in higher education. Researchers are also encouraged to employ mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies to gain deeper insights into employees' workplace experiences, organizational dynamics, and leadership practices. Moreover, future investigations may further strengthen methodological rigor by utilizing standardized instruments with established psychometric properties or by conducting extensive validation procedures for researcher-developed tools.

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